

HOSTILITY BETWEEN UNRELATED FAMILIES 209

distance and perhaps a certain moderation sanctioned by the 571
fear of too many reprisals. In the third and farthest area of the 609
community, any individual family only rarely, and possibly 578
never, undertook hostile raiding operations on an ambitious 685
scale; here again the frequency of these acts was limited by con-
siderations of time and distance, and more certainly by the fear
of retaliation. According to the distance which separated un-
related families, there was a certain inverse relation between the
frequency of hostile contact and the severity of its manner of
expression.

The vigorous measures of Metaxas ended extensive sheep 571
theft. But today hostility still finds a parallel form of expression. 609
Since 1937 the sheep population of the Zagori has considerably 233
increased, with the result that the lands of most of the summer 578
villages are over-grazed; it is now the constant anxiety of each 685
group that its animals may not find enough grass to mate 311
effectively and resist disease, let alone return a good milk yield.
At the beginning of each summer, the President of the village 622
allots to each family or 'company' grazing land in proportion 423
to the size of each flock. If the number of Sarakatsani sheep
entitled to graze on the land of the village increases, there is
less grass for each sheep. In a very obvious sense the size and
condition of a family's flock are threatened by the sheep of
other families, and the grass they eat. It is now too dangerous
to steal the sheep, but it is possible to steal the grass. During 425
the summer heat, sheep are grazed at night; the technique of
grass stealing is to pasture sheep just over the boundary dividing
a man's own land from that of his immediate neighbour, but
never so deeply into his territory that he cannot retreat rapidly
at the approach of the other shepherd or the agricultural guard.
It is the duty of this official to summon all offenders before the 428
local agricultural court, where fines, generally of the order of
two or three pounds, are levied. It is very doubtful if the value
of the grass taken in the course of the trespassing is equivalent to
the fines which are paid, even if the fact is ignored that a neigh-
bour is almost certainly making similar raids in the opposite
direction. The Sarakatsani are well aware of these facts, but
they feel that inactivity would be weakness and would be so in-
terpreted by the neighbouring groups. It is the consciousness
and certainty of the hostile intent of other families threatening

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685 responsible to God for the sin which he has committed. In order to be
577 absolved he must later confess his sin publicly "during a drinking bout
783 among pals or during the shearing." His account testifies at one and the
[784] same time to his pride in the accomplished prowess and to his belief in
punishment inflicted by the Supreme Judge, the remission of which is de-
pendent on this which unfortunately we cannot go into more deeply for lack
685 of data. This aspect is encountered again in another case: that of the
577 destruction of a beehive. That act is considered criminal for, through
825 it, "one kills many souls" (the souls of the bees) and deprives the
[784] Church of the wax that the bees could produce.
[784]

685 This way of adjusting the punishment to the circumstances merits
577 our attention. For it shows us how Sarakatsani society conceives of justice
and reparation in these specific instances.

By shooting at the thief they are merely defending their property
(625) and possible their lives. Any recourse to protection from the police is
not possible to those who live in the mountains and on the edge of a hostile
and indifferent state; so there is nothing left for them but to shoot at
the one who threatens (and in any case with an armed hand) to deprive them
of their means of subsistence and possibly their lives.

/222/ If, after the theft, they are content to demand restitution
of the animals carried off or simply to retaliate in order to be compensated,
that is because there is no longer any question of defense, and all that
is involved is compensation for the damage caused. If the culprit does
not want to conform, his refusal is merely a further challenge, a new
wound to the pride of the robbed owner; and it is in response to this
humiliation that the latter seeks to kill the thief. If he does not do
so he will be dishonored in the eyes of his associates.

[559] Finally, the pride of the unpunished thief and the admiration of the
others for his prowess are very understandable. Among a people who live
in difficult and always dangerous conditions, courage and skill, even when
[783] directed toward evil, inspire respect. However, the public confession
shows that the bravery does not gainsay the illegal character of this act.